

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02116

AREA

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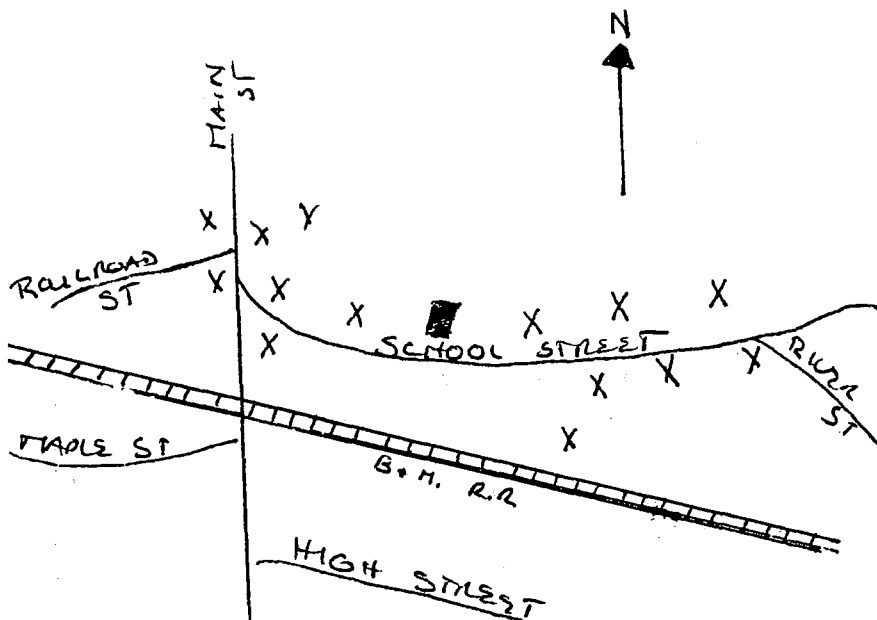
FORM NO.

496



Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection(s).
Indicate north

Assessor's Map # H-2A-45



UTM REFERENCE _____

USGS QUADRANGLE _____

SCALE _____

Town ACTON

Address 20 School Street

Historic Name William H. Gray

Edwin Tarbell (1870s)

Use: Present residential

Original residential / commercial

DESCRIPTION

Date 1856

Source "Mill Corner" / Nylander notes

Style Greek Revival - altered

Architect unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric wood & asphalt shing

Outbuildings none

Major Alterations (with dates) side 20th c
addition - siding (asphalt, wood shingles)

Condition fair

Moved no Date n/a

Acreage less than one acre

Setting North side of School St. at village
center, opposite r.r. and among other
residential and commercial 19th c. buildin.

Recorded by Betsy Conant - 1988
Gretchen G. Schuler - 1990

Organization Acton Historical Commission

Date April, 1990

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

The property is eligible for National Register nomination as part of the School-River-Main Mill and Commercial Historic District for Criteria:

A - its association with the development of the railroad community from the 1840s with thriving mills and retail businesses on School, River and Main, as well as the owners and workers housing.

C - its representation of the Greek Revival and Italianate architecture most popular in developing the community of South Acton.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

South Acton, once part of the 1000-acre farm granted to Concord's Major Simon Willard, was sold to Ephriam and Samuel Jones and Jonathan Knight in 1701. The first fulling mill was established and throughout the 18th and 19th century mill privileges on Fort Pond Brook, east of Main Street, were developed. South Acton became the first village center of Acton, preceding Acton Centre, which evolved around the Common, the Meeting House and school from 1806. With the advent of the Fitchburg Railroad in 1844 came the major growth of South Acton Village as an industrial village.

School Street, named for its association with the first three schools in the area, was laid out as early as 1703 and was the most direct route to nearby Concord. Most of the housing was built after the railroad was established with most of the more substantial mill owner housing on the north side of the street (facing south) and rental property for mill employees on the south side of the street which is steeply pitched with most lots going through to River Street.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Atlases/Maps/Birdseye: 1856, 1870, 1875, 1889, 1892.
Forbes, Nylander, "Mill Corner" (South Acton Village), 1989.
Nylander, Robert, research notes.
Phalen, History of Town of Acton, 1954.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: ACTON	Form No: F-496
Property Name: 20 School St.	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION - 20 SCHOOL STREET

The large shingled dwelling has been altered in size, plan, and materials. From the west side it appears to be a 1 1/2 story Cape Cod cottage that has been built into the slope of the land. From School Street the building displays a wide 2 1/2 story gable front that is 5 bays wide and has two large overhead garage doors and a side hall entrance in what appears to be a raised basement. There is a projecting 1 1/2 story 3-bay side ell. Wood shingles cover the south facade and the east and west sides have brick patterned asphalt shingles.

The south facade has the two 20th century garage doors with 4 lights in each and a side entrance with simple gable roof porch on the raised basement or first level. There are five 6/1 windows with applied molded surrounds and louvered shutters at the middle level and three 6/1 sashed windows in the gable peak. The flat, narrow corner boards support short narrow returns of the unadorned gable overhang. The projecting side ell with three 6/1 bays has only a slight pitch to the gabled roof. There are horizontal single light windows at the first story or raised basement level of this ell.

The west facade has a center entrance which is flanked by 1/1 sash set into applied molded frames. There is a modern wood porch and railing and a metal roundheaded doorhood.

HISTORICAL STATEMENT - 20 SCHOOL STREET (continued)

The building is not characteristic of a style or period due to alterations. It was built in 1856 by William H. Gray, who had a store at this location. In 1861 at 40 years of age Gray, who was listed as a trader, enlisted into Captain Daniel Tuttle's Company to serve in the Civil War. By 1870 Gray's property had passed to Edwin Tarbell (1836-1904) who was a farmer and also had enlisted in Tuttle's Company at the age of 25. Tarbell also had a store selling items such as boots, shoes, glassware, and groceries. In 1875 Tarbell advertised his house and store for sale as well as a close-out sale. Later in the same year he was again advertising the merchandise sold in his store and had added a carriage house at the rear by the end of the same year. Tarbell's widow Amelia D. Comstock lived here until her death in 1910.

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